



Helena College Mission:

Helena College supports our diverse community by providing the paths and tools necessary to assist learners in achieving their educational and career goals.

IT and Programming Advisory Council Meeting Minutes

May 12th 2025, 5:30 PM, DON 122

Attendees:

Community Members:

Steven Zimmerman – Figure Technologies
Mike Murray – State of MT, Department of Admin.
Stanley Munson – State of MT, Department of Agriculture
Michelle Hauer – State of MT, Department of Transportation

Helena College Members:

Cheryl Ravenscroft – Director of K-12 Partnerships
Robyn Kiesling - Executive Director of General Education and Transer
Kylie Carr – General Education Division Manager

Program/Department Updates

Changes this year

- Bill Hallinan is retiring. Thank you to Bill for you work for the department.
- The following degrees or certificates have been put on moratorium due to lack of enrollment: DevOps AAS, IT Help Desk CAS, AS Computer Science, ServiceNow CTS, Web Development CTS.
 - Only 4 students in the service now certificate pathway
 - With Bill retiring, we are now just focusing on the Software Development pathway
- Switched to using Postgres SQL in our Databases and SQL course.

Topics for Discussion

Artificial Intelligence

- Bryon built an AI Programming Tutor chat bot, we hope to be able to deploy that for students next year.
 - We have always had trouble with students reaching out to tutors, and now post-Covid it has gotten worse.
 - Trying to see how we can deploy the tutor chat box and get it running. Hopefully by the fall semester.
- We currently encourage students to use AI to assist them by explaining concepts, review code, explain error messages, but discourage them from just having the AI solve their problems for them.
 - If instructors see an issue with this, they sit down with the student to see if they can show how they did the programming making sure they did not have AI do the work for them.
- Should we cover AI concepts and techniques in our curriculum? How do your employees use AI. Do you have policies in place about employee use of AI on the job?
 - Cheryl stated that over 80% of jobs are going to start requiring that people know how to use AI to help boost the production of jobs.
 - Michelle asked how do you train the model? She also stated that the biggest issue they are running into with AI is using it for automatized testing tools.
 - Steven stated that there is two sides to it: Software developer of AI and the software developer using AI. His policy is that he provides a list of which ones can be used and that AI is only used for recommendations to help any road blocks when generating.
 - Mike stated that he has employees sign a contract that you will use AI in appropriate manner. He also stated that he uses AI to help tweak the coding that he has made and to help with problem solving to build that skill set. It is very useful skill, but it's hard to make sure that students don't rely on AI to do it for them.
- Future of the industry. How should we be evolving?
 - Advisory members suggested the following:
 - That students need to know how to fix someone else's code. For example, Debug an ugly code that's been messed with for over 20 years.
 - Another skill is digging through a code that works, but really could be written better.
 - Real world skills, don't stress on the fancy tech and coding.
 - Communication for users/customer in a language they can understand.

Feedback on Software Development AAS degree

- Any topics we should be adding?
 - Advisory Board members suggested the following:
 - Code review course (take legacy code apart)
 - Type script
 - Introduction to operating systems in the command line
 - Source control
 - Not object orientating (functional programming)
 - Reactive programming
 - APIs
 - Hibernate
- Any topics we should be removing?
 - Advisory Board Members suggested the following:
 - SOAP – many places are moving off of it

Student Performance:

- Have you identified any gaps in the knowledge or training of our graduates? If so, can you please expand on the identified gaps?
 - Members made the following comments:
 - Working with codes and scripts that work but are not in great function, so how do we make it better from what is there? This is usually someone else that built the system forever ago and you have no idea how it was built.

Student Preparation:

- What non-technical (soft skills, 21st century skills, employability skills, etc.) are most important to you?
 - Members made the following suggestions:
 - Communication with businesses/costumers
 - Functional programming

Upcoming needs:

- What trends, in technology or other areas, do you see in your industry that may require new skill sets for workers?
 - Members made the following comment:
 - Accessibility (ADA) compliant
- How can we better partner/collaborate with you?
 - Members made the following suggestions:

- Can use us for real life coding reviews
- Can speak about customer service skills

Other:

- We need adjunct instructors, do you have any interest in teaching or helping to train skills in our program? Do you know anyone that may be interested?